



The
global
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agency

The impact of maintenance on the customer experience

Once your retail displays have been rolled out to your desired locations, maintenance is crucial to ensure they continue to drive sales and the returns you expect from them.

Maintenance spans everything from replacing broken or stolen demonstration products, to repairs and general upkeep of the display and aesthetics, but what impact does this have on the customer experience?

What constitutes a good customer experience in-store?

Your retail displays should be designed to enable customers to try before they buy and easily find all the information they need without necessarily having to interact with a store assistant. Here are some key display considerations;

- The customer should be given a premium quality experience that ideally translates into a sale, so it's vital that your product or demonstration is fully functioning at all times and effectively showcases its key features and benefits. Naturally, a consumer considering an investment in a premium product with a premium price bracket will want to see and experience what they're planning to spend their money on, compare it to other options and make an informed decision.
- Displaying clear, concise and intuitive product information is also key to allow the customer to self-serve, if that's their preference. This means that displays need to offer the ability to interact with people and act as an advisor and information portal, requiring the display to work and perform to a high standard at all times.
- Remember that your display represents your brand in store and needs to do it justice. Everything from the product itself down to fixtures and fittings need to be high quality, in good condition and display clear, consistent branding.

Try before you buy

The 'demise of the high street' has been well-documented over the past few years, and with more stores closing daily across the country, retailers need to find a way to adapt and survive. A significant focus for retailers is to create valuable and compelling in-store experiences to drive footfall.

Whilst some consumers prefer to self-serve and shop independently, others still very much rely on in-store assistance. POPAI's Storedits Consumer Electronics Report found:



Most customers still prefer to purchase directly in stores, giving retailers a strong opportunity to drive sales through instore specialist advice and excellent customer service. Bricks-and-mortar are key for this category, so wise retailers are improving their outlets, focusing both on their strategic positioning and internal design. Many stores have now adopted a showroom style as it has become clear that the physical store now has a different role to play¹.



Being able to leave the store with the product on the same day is a motivation for many consumers, however some are becoming savvier to the competitive online marketplace, performing online research and price comparisons to get the best possible deal. But is the physical store struggling to compete with the convenience of online shopping? Not necessarily, as it appears that the physical shopping experience still plays an important role.

In fact, a report by KPMG found that generation X (definitions vary but typically referring to those born between the early 1960s and late 1970s) tend to visit a physical store to see, try or fit a product before making their purchase online².

In addition, consumer research conducted by Vista Retail Support³ found:

70% enjoy the full experience of going into stores to browse and see what's new

59% said they prefer to find and buy goods in person

Exciting use of technology would entice consumers into a store; **61%** would visit stores regularly to use virtual and augmented reality applications, smart mirrors and interactive gaming

Either way, the role of the physical in-store experience (and therefore your retail displays) should not be underestimated in the buying cycle. According to POPAI;



Consumer electronics, by their nature, encourage a high level of consumer research and product comparison. The internet is an obvious source of information, also encouraging the growth of online sales. But stores still have a huge opportunity to provide personalised advice and offer shoppers the chance to connect with products before purchasing¹.



¹ Storedits, Consumer Electronics, POPAI

² The truth about online consumers – 2017 Global Online Consumer Report, KPMG

³ Vista Retail Support research – Internet Retailing

The importance of maintenance

Once you've invested in having a presence and providing a great customer experience in store, you'll need a maintenance agreement to protect that outlay. Bringing a product into a store typically requires a significant investment in the launch, rebranding, marketing and the display itself – to list just a few.

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Without maintenance, a retail display can deteriorate very quickly and sales will not last as long as they should. Put simply, lifespan of your customer-facing displays is essential to boost your ROI.

In a survey of 200 retail professionals, 100% Group found that 96% said retail displays are an important part of the customer experience, and 97% say they are important for sales, contributing to a 30% increase in sales.

However, if you fail to ensure that you're providing a positive in-store experience, this can actually have an adverse effect on the business. To develop the best understanding, it can be helpful to put yourself in the shoes of the consumer. If a brand's display is poor quality or in a shabby condition, how would it affect the perception of them? If, as a consumer, you were to go into a store to test a product and it was broken, are you likely to have confidence in the product when it's in your own environment? Would a negative experience turn you off purchasing that product altogether? Could it even put you off the brand for good?

A negative experience can not only have impact on that particular shopper. According to a report by Yotpo, 60% of customers will tell friends and family about a brand they're loyal to³, suggesting it can have a wider impact. Poor in-store experiences not only reflect badly on the brand, but also perceptions of the retailers, which could even start to affect valuable brand-retailer relations. Maintenance is not just about one fixture, it's about brand preservation.

³ The state of customer loyalty in 2018, Yotpo

The maintenance checklist

Your maintenance requirements will depend on how much you invest as a brand and how complex your display is, but here are the key considerations you need to take into account:

1 A maintenance plan

You'll need one upfront even before the installation takes place and should be budgeted within the total cost of ownership of your display investment. It should cover all the following points on this checklist.

2 The product

It needs to be in full working order at all times, look good and provide a quality experience.

3 Updates

An electronic product may need to undergo regular updates. This is something that your maintenance contract will take care of – usually it will involve a store visit to do a manual update but in some cases it can be managed remotely using the technology itself.

4 Display enhancements

Branding, lighting, fixtures and information points all need to be maintained to remain aesthetically pleasing.

5 Helpdesk process

Things can and do go wrong so defining a clear process for faults to be flagged and recorded is crucial to make sure that issues can be addressed and resolved quickly. Consider online platforms for tickets to be raised by store staff and/or your field sales reps, and allow transparent progress tracking through to resolution.

6 SLAs

Create a standardised agreement outlining expectations between you and your provider. This should include:

- A** The time it takes to acknowledge receipt of a ticket
- B** The time it takes your provider to identify what needs to be done to resolve the issue
- C** If a store visit is required, the timeframe in which your providers should have attended and fixed the issue.

The maintenance checklist

7 Security and theft measures

What happens in the event of a theft or damage to a display or product? Your maintenance provider should be proactive to ensure they have spare products and items in stock so damaged or stolen items can be replaced quickly. If you sell consumer electronics, you could also look into the possibility of serial number tracking so any stolen items can be remotely disabled.

8 Spare parts inventory

Work with your display producer to consider inventory levels before your displays are manufactured; this will allow for more cost-effective production and mean the spares are available from the moment your new displays hit stores.

9 The right provider

Your partner should be totally transparent and maintain honest and open communication with you to provide visibility over the program at all times. Comprehensive reporting systems are vital to monitor and provide insight into all aspects of performance of the maintenance service.

Managing and maintaining visibility over complex displays, often in multiple stores and locations around the world, can be incredibly difficult for busy forward-thinking brands in the fast-paced retail environment. At 100%, we understand this fully and treat each challenge as an opportunity to discover a better way to do things. Whether you're looking to explore what 100% can offer or simply discuss your maintenance requirements, get in touch.